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**U. S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Kremmling Field Office
P. O. Box 68
Kremmling, CO 80459**

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NUMBER: CO-120-2004-14 EA

PROJECT NAME: Wolford Mountain Travel Management Plan

PLANNING UNIT: Wolford Mountain/Resource Conservation Area

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Kremmling Field Office, proposes to designate travel routes on approximately 33,150 acres of BLM lands north of Kremmling within the Wolford Mountain Project Area (see Map 1). The proposed route system would eliminate motorized or mechanized off-route travel, and would reduce the number of existing routes available for motorized or mechanized use; however approximately 135 miles of designated routes would remain available to the public for motorized or mechanized use during the non-winter use period.

The proposed action would improve soil, vegetation, and wildlife habitat conditions throughout the project area. An existing winter travel restriction would be expanded to include the entire project area to provide adequate habitat conditions during critical winter periods for pronghorn antelope, mule deer, and elk. Approximately 11 miles of existing BLM routes and 24 miles of county roads would remain open for snowmobile use. Reclamation of closed routes would be prioritized based on their impacts to the area's soil, water, and wildlife resources.

The proposed route system would complete a planning effort for the Wolford Mountain area originating with issuance of the 1984 Kremmling Resource management Plan (RMP), and continued in the 1988 Off-Road Vehicle Implementation Plan. The 1988 plan deferred implementation until a comprehensive travel route inventory could be completed. Final inventory efforts were completed in 2004, providing the necessary data to allow field office resource specialists to proceed with an environmental assessment to analyze the impacts of the proposed action and alternatives on the project area's natural and cultural resources.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

There is a need to complete travel management planning in the Wolford Mountain project area in order to:

- Address the increased use of motorized routes in the project area, and the resulting impacts to the area's natural and cultural resources.
- Follow through with implementation of the 1984 RMP and 1988 OHV Plan decisions to designate routes within the project area, applying current national management strategies and guidance for off-highway vehicle use on public lands.
- Identify appropriate actions to meet or maintain public land health standards in the project area.
- Provide for clear delineation of and appropriate use on designated routes through informational kiosks, maps, signing, and local educational forums.

ACRONYMS AND TERMS USED IN THIS DOCUMENT:

ACEC	Area of Critical Environmental Concern
ATV	All Terrain Vehicle (commonly called a 4-wheeler)
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
CDOW	Colorado Division of Wildlife
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CNHP	Colorado Natural Heritage Program
CNRG	Colorado Natural Resource Group
CRWCD	Colorado River Water Conservation District
DFC	Desired Future Condition
EA	Environmental Assessment
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
FONSI	Finding of No Significant Impact
4WD	Four-Wheel Drive Vehicle
GIS	Geographic Information System
GPS	Global Positioning System
KFO	Kremmling Field Office
OHV	Off-Highway Vehicle
ORV	Off-Road Vehicle
RMP	Resource Management Plan
RNA	Research Natural Area
R&PP	Recreation and Public Purposes
ROD	Record of Decision
ROS	Recreation Opportunity Spectrum
SLB	State Land Board
TMP	Travel Management Plan
T&E	Threatened & Endangered Species
WAPA	Western Area Power Administration
WSA	Wilderness Study Area

Kremmling Resource Area / Kremmling Field Office: The area of public lands, approximately 400,000 acres in size, identified in the 1984 RMP administered by the (then) Kremmling Area Office. In 1998, the BLM adopted two-tier organizational levels in several states, including Colorado. As a result of this restructuring, the Kremmling Area Office and the Kremmling Resource Area became synonymous with the Kremmling Field Office.

OHV vs. ORV: For many years the term “off-highway vehicle” (OHV) has been used by the public, industry, and the BLM interchangeably with the term “off-road vehicle” (ORV). However, only the term “off-road vehicle” (ORV) has a legally established definition in the Presidential Executive Orders and the BLM’s related 43 CFR 8340 regulations. In general, throughout this document the term “off-highway vehicle” (OHV) will be used, partly because it is a more commonly used term, but primarily because the regulations address vehicles which use roads and trails on BLM-administered land, and are therefore, not just “off-road”.

Project Area: The Wolford Mountain travel management project area, an area of approximately 42,600 acres in size (as outlined on Map 1). Approximately 33,150 acres or 77% of the project area consists of BLM public lands.

Project Sub-Area: A portion of the project area, which possesses characteristics which make it different from other areas within the project area. Within the Wolford Mountain project area are three sub-areas delineated by the Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) for their distinct natural and physical resource differences and recreation use patterns. These sub-areas are Wolford Mountain North, Wolford Mountain West, and Wolford Mountain South (see Management Goals and Objectives and Map 2 for more information and descriptions of the project sub-areas).

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BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

Location and Setting: Map 1 outlines the project area. The project area lies north of the confluence of the Colorado River, Blue River, and Muddy Creek watersheds at Kremmling, in the western portion of the Middle Park Basin in north-central Colorado. The southern boundary of the project area lies immediately north of and adjacent to the Town of Kremmling. The western boundary lies primarily along U.S. Highway 40, but includes some scattered segments of BLM lands west of the highway. The northern boundary lies approximately 13 miles north of Kremmling and is bounded by lands administered by the Colorado State Land Board. The eastern boundary is marked by BLM lands immediately west of County Road 2, but also includes some small parcels of BLM lands adjacent to County Road 2 in the northeast portion of the project area. U.S. Forest Service lands are in proximity to the project area to the west, north and east, ranging from 3 miles distant on the east to 7 miles distant on the west. Table 1 below indicates the total acres of BLM public lands and of other land ownership within the project area:

Table 1 - Project Area Land Ownership

LAND OWNERSHIP	ACRES
BLM	33,152
Private	8,546
State	934
Total Acres	42,632

Table 2 below indicates the total miles of routes on non-public lands within the project area:

**Table 2
Miles of Routes on Other Ownerships or Other Jurisdictions**

Ownership or Jurisdiction	Miles
County	33.36
State	6.45
Private	4.79
TOTAL	44.60

County: These are the county roads claimed and maintained by Grand County as part of the County road system. The County may designate county routes for OHV and snowmobile use through authority granted them by the State. The BLM coordinates with the county to allow ATV and snowmobile use on County roads to provide access to and across public lands.

State: The BLM is currently coordinating with the Land Board to provide reasonable access across State lands to public lands.

Private: These routes are located on private property. Only routes which connect to existing BLM routes are included. The BLM routes that connect to the private routes would be designated and BLM has considered the need for access to or from BLM lands for private property access or administrative needs for permittees.

Included on the northern edge of the project area is the Kremmling Cretaceous Ammonite Site, a Research Natural Area (RNA) and an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC).

Notable physical landmarks and popular outdoor recreation destination sites include the 1,447 acre Wolford Mountain Reservoir, located 6 miles north of Kremmling, and Wolford Mountain, which lies immediately east of the southern portion of the reservoir, approximately 4 miles north of Kremmling.

Topography, vegetation, and climate vary throughout the project area. Elevations range from 7,350 feet near Kremmling to 9,360 feet at the peak of Wolford Mountain. There are numerous small basins which drain into Muddy Creek in the western portion of the project area, and a few basins along the eastern perimeter of the area which drain to the east into Troublesome Creek. These basins are characterized by relatively gentle bottoms and infertile soils. Dry ridges with steeper slopes separate the basins. Vegetation is predominantly sagebrush steppe, with some coniferous forest atop Wolford Mountain. Occasional scattered stands of aspen dot the landscape along some of the ridges, and a few stands of cottonwoods and willows can be found in some of the basin bottoms. Summer months are warm and dry; however the area typically experiences frequent afternoon storms in July and August. These storms are more intense in the northern portion of the project area. Winters are usually cold with lower snow accumulation in the southern portion of the project area, while the higher elevation areas in the northern portion of the project area experience warmer temperatures but higher accumulations of snow.

The project area lies at the western end of Grand County. The county has experienced population growth of 62% since the 1990 census, with the latest 2003 estimate showing a population of 13,173 residents. Most of this growth has occurred at the east end of the county, near the Winter Park ski area. The nearest incorporated municipality to the project area is Kremmling, with a population of 1,578. Kremmling is also the largest incorporated municipality in the county and has experienced a 26% increase in population since the 1990 census. The towns of Hot Sulphur Springs, Parshall, Granby, Grand Lake, Winter Park, Tabernash, and Fraser make up the remaining communities within Grand County. The project area lies within a 2-hour drive of the Denver metropolitan area and other Front Range communities. Throughout the late 1990s the Front Range was experiencing rapid population growth, and, although this growth has slowed somewhat over the past few years, Grand County is still experiencing increased visitation as a result of its proximity to the Front Range.

Approximately 74% of Grand County consists of U.S. Forest Service, BLM, and State lands, and recreation is a major attraction on these lands. The 1984 RMP recognized the recreation value of Grand County's public lands in noting that "*Recreation on government administered lands within the resource area, regardless of agency administration, is becoming more important because these lands are close to the Denver metropolitan area and other Front Range communities*". Current recreational opportunities in Grand County include hiking, horseback riding, trail running, OHV riding and mountain biking during the summer months; and snowmobiling, downhill skiing and cross-country skiing during the winter months. Traditional recreation activities such as hunting, fishing, boating, camping, and driving for pleasure also attract large numbers of visitors, local residents, and second homeowners to Grand County. A few of the major recreation attractions include Winter Park Ski Area, Rocky Mountain National Park, Arapaho National Recreation Area, the Headwaters Historic and Scenic Byway, four sizeable reservoirs (including Wolford Mountain reservoir), and the Upper Colorado River

Special Recreation Management Area. U.S. Forest Service lands provide a wide range of non-motorized recreation opportunities within a 30-45 minute drive of the project area. Notable destination spots for these opportunities include the 47,140 Sarvis Creek Wilderness, the 72,180 acre Mt. Zirkel Wilderness, and the 80,000 acre Troublesome Roadless Area.

History of Travel Management Planning in the Project Area: Since the Kremmling RMP and ROD were issued in 1984 there has been a series of efforts to plan and designated routes in the project area. A brief chronology of these efforts follows:

- In 1984, the Kremmling Resource Area RMP and ROD provided initial general direction to manage the motorized use that was occurring at the time in the Wolford Mountain “Resource Conservation Area” (RMP ROD, Resource Decisions, Table 2-1, Pg 13).
- In 1988, A Federal Register Notice placed the Wolford Mountain/Resource Conservation Area, a 25,200 acre area north of Kremmling, under a “Limited to Designated Roads and Trails” off-road vehicle designation.
- In 1988, an ORV Implementation Plan was prepared to identify actions necessary to implement ORV designations, and to manage the BLM lands within the resource area for ORV use in accordance with the general direction provided in the RMP. The objectives noted for this plan were to:
 - Provide for public needs or demands
 - Protect natural resources and the safety of public land users
 - Minimize conflicts among various users

In the 1988 ORV plan, the Wolford Mountain/Resource Conservation Area was noted as an area where intensive ORV use was occurring. The plan proposed limiting ORV use to designated roads and trails year around to protect soil, watershed, wildlife and rangeland values. However implementation of this portion of the plan was deferred until a more thorough inventory could be completed. In discussing the deferred action the Wolford Mountain area was referred to as *"Kremmling's backyard ORV playground"*, with numerous open roads and trails providing opportunities for nearly unrestricted use by 4x4s, ATVs, and dirt bikes/trail bikes. The area was also recognized as *"an important recreation resource for motorized vehicle use in both roaded and semi-primitive motorized settings while sensitive watershed, soil and wildlife habitat resource values must be protected, especially during winter months for big game and spring runoff to minimize soil erosion"*. Limited designations were to be put into effect following a completed route inventory of the area.

- In 1997, an initial inventory of routes was conducted using GPS technology. The routes were inventoried for location but no condition assessments were performed.
- In 2001, an effort was begun with the intent of developing a comprehensive travel management plan, which would designate routes for the entire area of BLM lands managed by the Kremmling Field Office. A Federal Register Notice was published documenting this intent and public meetings and formal scoping were conducted. During the winter of 2001/2002 field office resource staff, concerned about the growing popularity and increased use of routes on BLM lands in the Wolford Mountain area north of Kremmling, expressed a

strong need to accelerate and complete planning efforts in this smaller area, before proceeding with travel management in other areas. Based on this concern, a decision was made to complete a separate plan for the Wolford Mountain area and begin implementation as soon as possible.

- An inventory was started in 2002 of all two track routes in the area to determine location and general condition of the existing routes. The inventory was continued in 2003 and 2004 to include single track routes commonly used by motorcycles.
- In late 2003 and throughout most of 2004 an Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) of BLM resource specialists conducted a series of internal meetings and public meetings/workshops to solicit comments on a Proposed Action to designate routes in the Wolford Mountain area from various agencies, permittees, individuals and stakeholder groups. The IDT identified key issues and concerns, developed alternatives, and proceeded with an environmental assessment.

Key Issues and Concerns: The IDT identified numerous issues for the Wolford TMP from comments received through internal scoping and an extensive public involvement process. Details of the public involvement process are provided in Appendix 1. Forums in which interested parties provided comments included open houses, informal meetings with stakeholders and local agency officials, a presentation to the Northwest Resource Advisory Council, and formal public meetings/workshops. The IDT developed a mailing list of over 100 interested parties. Addressees on this mailing list were kept abreast of planning efforts and encouraged to submit written or email comments throughout the project. A large number of written comments and emails were received from these various forums.

As a result of the internal and external scoping process, four key issues were identified for the Wolford Travel Management Plan:

1. **Providing for access to meet a variety of motorized and non-motorized recreational and non-recreational needs.** Several comments focused on the need to provide for ATV, 4WD and motorcycle use on the public lands close to Kremmling. There is a history of high motorized use in this area and even many non-motorized users recognize the need to continue this use within the constraints of a designated route system. Numerous comments also noted the need to maintain “quiet areas” by providing for non-motorized use, and several comments stated the need to maintain access for administrative purposes, such as maintaining fences and watering facilities, repairing utility lines, and monitoring the area’s natural and cultural resources.
2. **Protecting the area’s natural, cultural and paleontological resources.** A number of comments recognized the need to limit access where appropriate to protect area resource values. The Wolford area serves as an important winter range for a variety of wildlife species, and contains important breeding and nesting habitat for Greater sage-grouse. A high number of cultural and paleontological sites are located within the project area. Much of the area’s soils are designated as ‘sensitive’, and soil erosion is evident in numerous locations. Several comments also noted the need to protect the area’s riparian zones, and not degrade area water quality.

3. **Providing for a designated route system which is safe, manageable (meets national OHV strategies and direction), and manages user conflicts.** A number of comments emphasized the need for the BLM's Kremmling Field Office to be able to sign, maintain, and enforce regulations on the travel route system. Comments also included the need to minimize or eliminate conflicts from motorized and non-motorized users. For example, there is an existing conflict between motorized users and target shooters, at a location where there is an existing shooting range and high OHV use.
4. **Providing for a designated route system which is adaptable to meet the area's current and future recreation and non-recreation motorized and non-motorized demands, while maintaining or improving land health.** Internal and external comments emphasized the need to provide for a travel route system which can adapt to changes in technology, new information, and future recreation and non-recreation demands on the area's public lands. Comments stressed the need to monitor the impacts of the selected travel route system and make changes in designations where appropriate to maintain or improve land health. Several comments included the need to ensure that the area's lands meet public land health standards.

Management Goals and Objectives: In an effort to comply with good land use planning practices and the BLM Land Use Planning Handbook, the IDT divided the project area into three project sub-areas (see Map 2), and developed desired outcomes expressed in terms of management goals and objectives. These goals and objectives were based on the key issues identified above, current RMP land use priorities and resource management objectives for the area, the area's unique physical features, and such guiding BLM documents as:

- *National Management Strategy for Motorized Off-Highway Vehicle Use on Public Lands.*
- *Recreation Management Guidelines to Meet Public Land Health Standards on BLM Lands in Colorado*
- *Colorado Public Land Health Standards*

Some management goals and objectives were similar in all three of the sub-areas; however these smaller areas helped the IDT to focus on individual routes within the context of the different characteristics of each area throughout the designation process. In designating routes for the Proposed Action and all of the action alternatives, the IDT applied a process which considered each route based on its individual characteristics or merits, and its relationship to sub-area goals and applicable land management mandates such as the Endangered Species Act. This process also complemented the IDT's extensive knowledge of the project area and its network of routes, while ensuring that NEPA guidance was closely followed. For example, the IDT applied their detailed knowledge of each sub-area's resources when designating routes at the sub-area level; however they also frequently paused to look at and review these designations at a broader landscape scale. In conducting this broader review the IDT considered resources and potential cumulative impacts to these resources within the entire Muddy Creek Watershed and beyond, including other BLM, State and U.S. Forest System lands surrounding the project area

Descriptions of the three sub-areas and their associated goals are as follows:

- Wolford Mountain North: This project sub-area is bounded on the south by CR 25. It extends west to US Highway 40, and north to the northern boundary of the project area. The Wolford Mountain North sub-area is characterized by a predominantly open landscape of high ridges and dry sagebrush-dominated bottoms. It contains important habitat for Greater sage-grouse and a variety of other wildlife species. The sub-area includes the Cretaceous Ammonite Site ACEC, as well as a number of other paleontological sites and cultural resource sites. It features such landmarks as 'Hay Gulch', 'Gunsight Pass' and 'Twin Peaks'. Although it receives low motorized and non-motorized use throughout much of the year, use increases considerably during the annual fall hunting seasons.

Management goals and objectives are focused on preserving this area's natural and cultural resource values while maintaining some access for users to interpret and enjoy those values. Goals include enhancing protection of the Ammonite Site; protecting and improving habitat for Greater sage-grouse and the area's other wildlife species; restoring soil and vegetation health where undue erosion has occurred from soil disturbing activities; maintaining and improving riparian health; maintaining and improving water quality; maintaining some motorized and non-motorized recreational access; and maintaining administrative access where needed.

- Wolford Mountain West: This project sub-area is bounded on the north by CR 25. It extends west of U.S. Highway 40 to include all of the BLM public lands, and is bounded on the south by the WAPA power line access road south of Wolford Mountain, and on the east by CR 224. The Wolford Mountain West sub-area includes such predominant physical features as Wolford Mountain, Little Wolford Mountain, and Wolford Mountain Reservoir. In addition to being the largest sub-area within the project area, this sub-area also has the most diverse landforms and vegetation, and provides unique opportunities for motorized and non-motorized recreation. It contains important habitat for Greater sage-grouse, and includes Osterhout milkvetch (*Astragalus osterhoutii*), a federally listed endangered plant species. Wolford Mountain is a critical habitat area for wintering elk and mule deer and its timbered slopes provide habitat for a variety of wildlife. The entire mountain is an important site of paleontological resources, and there are a number of cultural sites with the sub-area. The Wolford Mountain summit provides superb vistas of the Wolford Reservoir and the Gore Range to the west. The mountain also provides a local hiking opportunity that is usually reserved for areas on U.S. Forest System lands which surround the project area approximately 3-7 miles to the west, north, and east; however this opportunity is provided earlier in the year when the surrounding forest lands are typically under a blanket of snow. A motorcycle trail with a history of use dating back to the late 1970s crosses the peak and provides a unique and challenging single-track motorized experience. A private inholding, which serves as the site for a commercial cellular tower, is located on the northern portion of the Wolford Mountain summit. Access to this site across BLM lands is provided by an administrative easement on an existing road located on the eastern slope of the mountain.

Management goals and objectives include protecting the sub-area's natural, cultural, and paleontological resources; protecting and improving habitat for Greater sage-grouse; providing for a variety of motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities with higher emphasis on non-motorized activities in the vicinity of Wolford Mountain; restoring soil and

vegetation health in areas of disturbed and eroded soils; maintaining and improving riparian health; maintaining and improving water quality; reducing or maintaining sediment loads to the Wolford reservoir; reducing salt loads on BLM lands in the sub-area west of U.S. Highway 40; and maintaining administrative access for a variety of permitted uses.

- **Wolford Mountain South:** This project sub-area is bounded on the north by the WAPA power line access road and CR 224, on the west primarily by U.S. Highway 40 (also includes an unroaded parcel of BLM public lands west of U.S. 40), on the south by the project area boundary, and on the east by BLM lands extending closest to but west of CR 2. The sub-area includes such local and well known landmarks and physical features as the ‘Kremmling Cliffs’ (a notable land feature closely associated with Kremmling), ‘Cow Gulch’, ‘Horse Gulch’, ‘Red Mountain’, and the ‘Lower Muddy Creek Mitigation Area’. This sub-area presents the greatest management challenge since it is an area of high motorized use in close proximity to Kremmling, while being an area of key winter habitat for a number of species (e.g. pronghorn antelope, elk, mule deer, and Greater sage- grouse) during severe winters. It includes a small shooting range area that is located within an area of intense OHV use. Because the sub-area is readily accessible from Kremmling, it is subject to a high number of illegal dumping incidents. The sub-area also contains a number of cultural and paleontological resource sites, and includes important sage grouse breeding habitat.

Management goals and objectives for this sub-area include providing for higher levels of motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities, while managing user conflicts; protecting and improving Greater sage-grouse habitat; protecting and improving important winter habitat; reducing or eliminating illegal dumping; restoring soil and vegetation health in areas of disturbed and eroded soils; maintaining and improving water quality; protecting riparian areas within the Lower Muddy Creek Mitigation Area and Cow Gulch; and protecting the sub-area’s natural, cultural, and paleontological resources.

Actions Common to all Alternatives: Several actions which the IDT included in all alternatives, except the Current Use Alternative, are as follows:

Limited to Designated Roads and Trails – All motorized travel would be Limited to Designated Roads and Trails, except in a small high density play area. This action would expand the 1988 OHV plan which sought to designate routes in approximately 76% of the project area for motorized travel. This would also correlate to the BLM’s directive to transition from primarily Open areas to a managed transportation system.

Off Road Parking and Activities – Driving vehicles off a designated road to park for camping, picnicking, or hunting use would be limited to a maximum of 50 feet from the centerline of the road. No motorized travel beyond 50 feet of a designated route would be allowed for game retrieval.

Winter Snowmobile Limitation Area – The current winter snowmobile restriction area would continue in all alternatives. The current limitation restricts snowmobile use to designated routes from December 1 through April 30. The annual beginning date would be changed from December 1 to December 15 due to the addition of a late big game hunting season in the area and the need to provide hunter access during this season to meet CDOW big game harvest objectives. The original limitation was put in effect in 1987 to provide protection and security

for big game in critical winter range areas. This area includes all BLM lands in the project area south of CR 25 and east of U.S. Highway 40. The routes designated for snowmobile use during the restriction are CR 224, CR 25 and a portion of CR 22. The limitation restricts snowmobiles operating on snow to these designated and marked routes. No cross country travel by snowmobiles is allowed in the current limitation area. It does not restrict other motorized vehicles and in moderate-to-low snow years motorized vehicles could access many of the areas where big game is wintering.

Inclusion of Other Motorized Vehicles in Winter Limitation - The winter travel restriction would be expanded to include all motorized vehicle travel. The limitation period would be modified to extend from December 15 through April 15 the following year. All motorized travel would be limited to designated routes. Snowmobiles would be restricted to operating on 6 inches or more of snow and only on the designated routes. The Field Manager has the authority to modify the dates and type of vehicle use allowed on an as-needed basis, depending on winter conditions, after consulting with the BLM wildlife biologist, other BLM resource specialists, and the CDOW.

Administrative Access – This designation would limit motorized access on these routes to BLM authorized uses only. BLM employees, permittees, contractors, and personnel from other agencies would be allowed motorized access for resource management, maintenance, inventory, monitoring, or compliance purposes. Public use on these administrative routes would be limited to non-motorized access for foot, horse and mountain bike. Administrative use for right-of-way or other permit holders would be limited to authorized or permitted activities only. No motorized recreational use would be authorized on these routes. Winter access would be limited to emergency-use-only subject to prior approval by the Field Manager.

Cretaceous Ammonite Site - The current 40 acre closure to motorized use would be expanded to include the entire 200 acres within the designated site, with one exception on the existing road in the east end of the area. In the High Use Alternative this route would be Open-Limited and in the Proposed Action this route would be for administrative use only. The remainder of the 200 acre area would be limited to foot access only and closed to horse and bicycle use. Exceptions could be granted by the Field Manager for scientific study. A physical closure, such as buck and rail or barbed wire fencing, would be installed to provide added protection to the site.

Designation of a High-Density 'Play Area' – The Proposed Action and each of the action alternatives includes a high-density play area, located in the Wolford Mountain South sub-area where high ATV and motorcycle use is currently occurring. The designation of a play area was made by the IDT and carried through each alternative following recommendations from various groups, including the environmental community. The play area ranges in size from 18.8 acres in the Low Use Alternative, to 19.8 acres in the Proposed Action, to 36.5 acres in the High Use Alternative.

Rock Crawl Area – The Kremmling Field Office has received a request from a local OHV club for designation of an area for a technical four wheel drive trail and competitive rock crawls. The proposed location for this activity is in the vicinity of the proposed high-use play area and is shown on the alternative maps. Designating an area and allowing for this use would comply with the multiple use mandate of FLPMA, while confining this use to a single location where it

could be effectively managed. A site specific environmental assessment would still be required upon receipt of a detailed use proposal by the group.

Target Shooting - The existing target shooting area north of the Kremmling landfill would be closed due use conflicts with OHV use in the area. This closure would be subject to requirements in 43 CFR 8364.1 and would be implemented through a Federal Register Notice. BLM would coordinate with local partners and stakeholders to locate, develop, and manage a suitable replacement area which would meet current safety and health standards.

Implementation and Monitoring Plan – The Proposed Action and any of the action alternatives would incorporate an implementation and monitoring plan. This plan would be developed in conjunction with and subject to the travel route system chosen in the Record of Decision, would be updated annually, and would include, but not be limited to, such activities as signing, information and education forums, reclamation of closed routes, monitoring of impacts associated with continued use on designated open routes, location and planning for a new shooting range, etc.

Summer Use Period – The summer use period is the portion of the year that is not under the winter limitation. In the action alternatives this period will extend from April 15 through December 15 of each year. Use during the summer period is primarily by wheeled vehicles operating on soil, while winter use is primarily by snowmobiles operating on snow.

PROPOSED ACTION

The Proposed Action is to designate travel routes for use by motorized and non-motorized users. The designated routes would be signed on the ground, and maps would be prepared for kiosks at primary entry points and for hand distribution to users of the area. Bicycles and other mechanized vehicles would be limited to designated motorized and administrative routes. About 138 miles of routes would be available to the public for motorized use during the non-winter use periods. This is a reduction of approximately 40% when compared to the 230 miles available in the Current Use Alternative. No cross country travel or use on Closed/Reclaimed routes would be allowed for mechanized vehicles. Reclamation of closed routes would be prioritized based on wildlife habitat productivity, soil loss potential, cultural resource impacts, or other resource protection needs. This alternative strives to provide for a mix of quality motorized and non-motorized recreation experiences and opportunities. The emphasis for natural resource management would be to improve vegetation conditions across all three sub-areas through closures on routes with known resource damage or conflict. The winter seasonal closure area would be expanded to the entire project area, doubling the size of the existing winter closure. About 9 miles of BLM routes and 26 miles of county roads would be open for snowmobile use.

ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED ACTION

Four alternatives to the Proposed Action, including the Current Use Alternative, were developed by the IDT from comments and issues. Three of these alternatives were brought forward for analysis. One alternative, the Moderate Use Alternative, was very similar to the Proposed Action; therefore this alternative was dismissed from further analysis. In developing and

assessing the Proposed Action and alternatives, the team considered the management goals for each sub-area in addition to comments submitted by stakeholders, State and local agencies, and other interested parties. The three alternatives to the Proposed Action that were analyzed are as follows:

Current Use (No Action) Alternative: This alternative would postpone changes to the management of motorized and non-motorized recreation use on the Wolford Mountain area until the Resource Management Plan (RMP) is either amended or revised. Under this alternative it is expected that motorized use would continue to increase on existing routes and, due to increased demand the establishment of additional user-created routes occur. About 230 miles of routes would be available for motorized recreation in this alternative. Any proposed closures or restrictions of existing OHV routes to prevent resource damage or user conflicts would be reviewed and implemented subject to special rules authorities provided under the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 8340 Off-Road Vehicles. Formal proposals for new roads or trails would be evaluated in a site-specific environmental assessment. Cross country travel by foot, horse and bicycle would continue to be allowed. The existing snowmobile limitation area and time period would remain in effect.

Low Use Alternative: This alternative would provide for minimal motorized recreation opportunities within a 'Limited to Designated Roads and Trails' management scenario. Bicycles and other mechanized vehicles would also be limited to designated routes. Approximately 38 miles of routes would be designated and available for motorized recreation. The number of miles available to the public for motorized use during the non-winter use periods would be reduced by about 83% when compared to the Current Use Alternative. The primary management emphasis would be the protection and enhancement of natural resource values through a substantial reduction in the travel routes available for motorized or mechanized use. Reclamation of closed routes would be prioritized based on wildlife habitat productivity, soil loss potential, cultural resource impacts, or other resource protection needs. Non-motorized recreation activities would be encouraged and quiet zones would be created around Wolford Mountain and the Twin Peaks area. The winter seasonal closure area would be expanded to the entire project area, doubling the size of the existing winter closure. About 3 miles of BLM routes and 11 miles of county roads would be open for snowmobile use.

High Use Alternative: This alternative would provide for the highest levels of motorized and mechanized recreation opportunities within a 'Limited to Designated Roads and Trails' management scenario. About 196 miles of routes would be designated and available for motorized and mechanized recreation to provide a wide variety of riding opportunities. The total number of routes available to the public for motorized use during the non-winter use periods would be reduced by 15%, when compared to the Current Use Alternative. The emphasis for natural resource management would be to maintain the integrity of existing vegetation with some improvements to conditions through closures on routes with resource damage or serious visitor conflict. Reclamation of closed routes would be prioritized based on wildlife habitat productivity, soil loss potential, cultural resource impacts, or other resource protection needs. The winter seasonal closure area would be expanded to the entire project area, effectively doubling the size of the protection area. About 62 miles of BLM routes would be open for snowmobile use, primarily in the area north of CR 25. All county roads in the project area would remain open to all uses throughout the year.

SUMMER USE: The following table compares the miles of various types of routes by alternative, during the summer use period. Refer to Maps 3-6 for complete overviews.

Table 3 -Miles by Alternative by Route Type During Summer Use Period

ROUTE TYPE	INVENTORY STATUS	DESIGNATIONS BY ALTERNATIVE		
	CURRENT USE	LOW USE	HIGH USE	PROPOSED ACTION
LIMITED				
Open-Limited	175.33	*30.18	177.79	**104.84
ATV	20.64	6.24	6.38	16.05
Motorcycle	34.52	1.95	***12.12	***17.08
<i>Subtotal - Motorized</i>	230.49	38.37	196.29	137.97
Administrative	0.00	74.99	18.59	28.61
Foot Only	1.46	3.55	0.51	1.04
CLOSED				
Closed/Rehab	4.20	119.24	20.76	68.60

INVENTORY STATUS: During inventory, routes were assigned designations based on natural physical constraints, such as width, and current use.

LIMITED: There are a variety of limitations that would be used to manage use on BLM routes. *They include:*

Open-Limited: The least restrictive travel designation which includes graveled roads, maintained native material (dirt) roads, and primitive four-wheel drive roads. These routes can accommodate conventional sized motor vehicles, such as cars and trucks, but are also open for use by ATVs, motorcycles, bicycles, horses, and foot travel except during the winter limitation from December 15 through April 15 the following year.

ATV: These routes are intended for use primarily by ATVs (including 3-wheelers) but are also available for motorcycles, bicycles, horses, and foot travel. The maximum width of any motorized or mechanized vehicle allowed on these routes is 50 inches.

Motorcycle: Includes routes that are intended for use primarily by single track motorcycles but are also available for use by bicycles, horses, and foot travel.

Administrative: Routes designated for authorized motorized use only on public lands for access to power lines, grazing facilities and improvements, radio and cell phone towers, private land, and other uses where the BLM has issued a right of way, easement, or permit. They are available to the public for foot, horse and bicycle travel.

Foot Only: These routes are intended for foot travel only. No motorized, mechanized or horse use is allowed.

CLOSED: Routes closed to motorized and mechanized use due to resource concerns or conflicts. They are available to the public for foot and horse travel and are closed to bicycle use. These routes would be prioritized for signing, physical closure structures, and would be reclaimed or allowed to naturally revegetate.

* 1.60 miles would be closed seasonally to protect critical sage grouse breeding habitat.

** 2.64 miles would be closed seasonally to protect critical sage grouse breeding habitat

*** 2.30 miles of motorcycle trail would be closed seasonally to protect raptor nesting habitat & provide solitude for hikers and joggers in the spring and fall.

WINTER USE: Table 5 and 6 below indicate the miles of route types in the current winter restriction and the proposed winter restriction expansion. See Maps 7-10 for a complete overview.

**Table 5 - Existing Winter Limitation Area (15,811 acres)
Miles by Alternative by Route Type**

ROUTE TYPE	CURRENT USE
Open	0
Snowmobile Only	0
Administrative	0
Closed / Non-motorized	140.0
BLM Miles	140.0
County - Snowmobile	7.3
County - Open	13.6

**Table 6 - Proposed Expanded Winter Limitation Area (33,152 acres)
Miles by Alternative by Route Type**

ROUTE TYPE	CURRENT USE	LOW USE	HIGH USE	PROPOSED
Open	96.24	.45	62.16	0
Snowmobile Only	0	0	0	7.23
ATV	0	.97	0	0
Administrative	0	1.21	.5	2.10
Closed / Non-motorized	140.02	233.63	173.60	226.93
BLM Miles	236.26	236.26	236.26	236.26
County - Snowmobile	7.30	10.69	0	26.07
County - Open	23.13	19.74	30.43	4.36

Open routes are open to all vehicles through the winter.

Snowmobile Only routes are open only to snowmobiles operating on 6 inches or more of snow between December 15 and April 15 of the following year.

County – Snowmobile are county roads that are either not winter maintained or designated by the Board of County Commissioners as a county snowmobile route. These routes are open to all vehicles if less than 6 inches of snow exists and limited to snowmobiles only when there are 6 inches or more of snow.

County – Open are county roads open to all vehicles through the winter. No travel is allowed off of these designated routes even if no snow exists in the area in order to provide protection for wintering big game.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT CARRIED FORWARD:

A Moderate Use Alternative was initially developed. As the Proposed Action was developed from external and internal input, it became apparent that the Moderate Use Alternative was so similar to the Proposed Action, that proceeding with a separate analysis would have been of little/no value in comparing environmental effects. An alternative was also submitted by the Friends of Wolford Mountain on April 2, 2004 as the IDT was developing the Proposed Action. The IDT felt that this alternative fell between the Low Use Alternative and the Proposed Action in the range of alternatives. Although this alternative (Friends Alternative), which divided the project area into subunits and proposed actions primarily focused on resource protection, was not carried forward for analysis, the IDT continually checked the Proposed Action against this alternative as it was refined. For instance, the Proposed Action includes a *play area* at a location where high motorized use is presently occurring in the Wolford Mountain South sub-area. The Friends Alternative also includes a similar *play area* in the same location; however the *play area* incorporates a larger site in the Friends Alternative. The management objectives and desired future conditions for the project sub-areas were also similar to the management objectives and desired future conditions for the subunits in the Friends Alternative.

PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW: The Proposed Action is subject to and has been reviewed for conformance with the following plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3):

Name of Plan: Kremmling Resource Management Plan (RMP), Record of Decision (ROD)

Date Approved: December 19, 1984; Updated February 1999

Decision Number/Page: 9. Off-Road Vehicle Management, Table 2-1, ORV Designations

CONFORMANCE TO OTHER PLANS: The Proposed Action follows through with the 1988 *Off-Road Vehicle Implementation Plan*, which limited motorized use to existing routes but deferred implementation subject to a completed inventory of the existing routes.

CONFORMANCE TO STATUTES, REGULATIONS, AND POLICIES: The Proposed Action conforms to the following statutes, regulations, policies, and guidelines:

FLPMA: In *Declaration of Policy, Section 102. (a), (8)* of the 1976 Federal Land Policy and Management Act, Congress set forth the policy statement that “*it is the policy of the United States that the public lands be managed in a manner that will protect the quality of scientific, scenic, historical, ecological, environmental, air and atmospheric, water resource, and archaeological values; that where appropriate, will preserve and protect certain public lands in their natural condition; that will provide for fish and wildlife and domestic animals; and that will provide for outdoor recreation and human occupancy and use*”

National Management Strategy for Motorized Off-Highway Vehicle Use on Public Lands: In 2001, the BLM issues a national strategy for providing guidance to “*determine and implement better on-the-ground motorized off-highway vehicle management solutions designed to*

conserve soil, wildlife, water quality, native vegetation, air quality, heritage resources, and other resources, while providing for appropriate motorized recreational opportunities.”

Instruction Memorandum No. 2004-005: In October of 2003, the BLM, through an Instruction Memorandum, emphasized policy, provided clarification, and additional guidance for management of motorized and other access on the public lands in accordance with existing law, executive orders, proclamation, regulation, and policy. Within this context, this memorandum states that *“Selection of a network of roads and trails should be performed for all limited areas in each RMP. This requires establishment of a process that includes selecting specific roads and trails within the limited area or sub-area and specifying limitation(s) placed on use.”*

Standards for Public Land Health: In January 1997, Colorado Bureau of Land Management (BLM) adopted the Standards for Public Land Health (Standards) in all of their RMPs. The Standards describe natural resource conditions needed to sustain public land health and relate to all uses of the public lands. They encompass upland soils, riparian systems, plant and animal communities, threatened and endangered species, and water quality. Because a standard exists for these five categories, a finding must be made for each of them in an environmental analysis. These findings are located in specific resource elements listed below. A copy of the Standards is available for review at the Kremmling Field Office.

Recreation Management Guidelines to Meet Public Land Health Standards: In December 2000, Colorado BLM issued Recreation Management Guidelines (Guidelines) to help achieve and maintain healthy public lands as defined by the Standards for Public Land Health. These guidelines are tools, methods, and techniques that can be used by managers to maintain or meet the Standards. A copy of the Guidelines is available for review at the Kremmling Field Office.